



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1301.6 - Tasmanian Year Book, 1998

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Feature Article - Aerobics (Tasmanian Year Book, 1998)

In 1995-96, a survey found that aerobics was the most popular sporting activity in Tasmania. About 15,600 people took part in an aerobic activity in the 12 months prior to the survey; 91% of these participants were female. This made aerobics the most popular type of physical activity for females. However, it was the least popular for Tasmanian males. This was a result that was experienced Australia-wide: aerobics was the most popular sport nationally, and it was dominated by females (81% of aerobic participants Australia-wide being female).

Aerobics refers to the aerating of the blood through continuous rhythmic exercise. Aerobic exercise improves the heart's capability to transfer oxygen to the working muscles. Early on in the 1980s it was heavily callisthenic- and exercise-based but with innovators such as Jane Fonda and Jackie Sorensen in the US emphasising the dance aspect of aerobics, Australian aerobics moved in the same direction.

Now many variations of the original aerobics style have been developed to suit the different types of people that participate in aerobic activity, ranging from beginner to advanced. These styles include high and low impact aerobics, cardio-funk, step and water aerobics. Classes in these types of aerobics are conducted on a daily basis in many health and fitness clubs State-wide.

Aerobics has now established a strong base in community recreation programs and is a significant component of school fitness curriculums. The livelihood of many health and fitness clubs is dependent on its aerobic program. Training programs have been developed for instructors as part of the national Fitness Leader program in an aim to formalise the industry and now many people can make a career out of conducting and running aerobic classes.

As well as being a popular fitness activity, aerobics has also developed into a competitive sport. However, most Tasmanians that participate in the sport tend to participate not for the competitive side but for the benefits that they will gain by participating in a satisfying physical sporting activity. The major benefit of undertaking aerobic activity is to improve cardiovascular (aerobic) fitness. This helps to prevent coronary heart disease and circulatory and respiratory problems. It is also a useful tool for weight control.

Another benefit of aerobics is that it proves to be a relatively inexpensive sport. The survey in 1995-96 found that the average cost per participant was \$305. This consisted of membership costs, transport, weekly fees, equipment and clothing.

Levels of participation in aerobics is also up to the individual. It could range from as infrequently as once a month through to five times a week. Hence, many costs fluctuate. Most classes run for an hour and are on at varying times throughout the day, enabling a wide cross section of people to participate. Aerobics is also a sport that individuals are able to tailor to their own physical development needs, and benefit accordingly. This goes some way to explaining its popularity.

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